

IN SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 25, 1836.

Read, and ordered to be printed.

MR. DAVIS made the following

REPORT,

WITH SENATE BILL NO. 232.

The Committee on Commerce have considered the resolutions of Tennessee, Illinois, and Indiana, and sundry petitions, praying for the erection of marine hospitals on the Western waters, and now report as follows:

It appears by a statute approved the 16th day of July, A. D. 1798, and several acts in addition thereto, that Congress made early provision for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, by requiring each seaman serving on board of registered vessels arriving from foreign ports to pay to the collector of the port, upon such arrival, twenty cents a month; and all serving on board of vessels licensed for the coasting trade, to pay a like sum at the end of each year, to the collector where the vessel renews her license.

By the construction given to these acts, the registered vessels engaged in the coasting trade are not held liable. Fishing vessels, whether enrolled or registered, are also exempt, because fishermen are not usually employed upon wages, and have little occasion for the aid of a public fund.

The money thus collected is disbursed under the direction of the President of the United States, for the relief of sick and disabled seamen. The subjoined table shows the whole amount, as far as the returns have been made, of what has been collected, the places where collected, and where expended. It appears the fund has not been adequate to relieve the sick, though none except those who have contributed, have received the benefit of it. The United States have from time to time supplied the deficiency by small appropriations.

There are three marine hospitals in the United States connected with this fund, to wit: one at Boston, one at Norfolk, and one at Charleston. The first was built out of the fund in Massachusetts, where the contributions have greatly exceeded the expenditures. The others are probably also considered as founded out of the fund, though the expenditures in those cities have greatly exceeded the contributions. Where there are no hospitals belonging to the fund, the sick are provided for, either in other hospitals, or private houses, and compensation made out of the fund,

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for nursing, lodging, and medical aid. The sick have been thus comfortably provided for, their sufferings mitigated, and their health restored. The fund has been such a blessing to the destitute sailor when separated from his friends, and destitute of the means of providing for himself, that the monthly contributions have been cheerfully paid, and no exemption from them desired.

From these facts, it appears that the marine hospital fund for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, is almost exclusively contributed by the sailors. The hospitals and the fund are their own, held by the United States merely as a parental protector. The impression which prevails in many parts of the country that it is a public charity sustained by the United States out of the public treasury is erroneous, for no such policy has ever been adopted.

The memorialists represent that the watermen of the West have great and urgent occasion for hospitals to relieve their sufferings, and pray Congress to erect them. The committee entertain no doubt of the verity of these representations.

But this cannot be done without a departure from the established policy of the country. Nor is it desirable to have hospitals at all places where it is expedient to provide relief for the sick. It is manifest that in by far the greater number of our ports, there is annually but a small number who require aid, and those generally for but a short period each. To provide and keep hospitals in such places, in readiness to receive the sick, would obviously be very ill-judged economy, provided other accommodations can be had. For it is manifest, that suitable conveniences and attendance for the sick can be had upon private contract, at much less expense. Hospitals are therefore reserved for large cities or points where the current of navigation casts many sick. This has been found a safe and satisfactory policy, and the committee see no sufficient reason for departing from it. It might be added, that a new policy, which seeks relief in the public treasury, cannot be adopted in the West, without being extended to the Atlantic frontier, as a discrimination in favor of one portion of the people would give just offence to those neglected.

While, therefore, the committee are of opinion that relief ought to be granted, they are averse to the adoption of a policy which must lead to an abandonment of the present system.

In order to determine what should be done, the committee have endeavored to ascertain how far the laws in regard to hospital money have been applied to the Mississippi and its tributaries. There is much tonnage that is or ought to be enrolled and licensed upon those waters, and such is clearly liable for hospital money, and yet the entire amount that has been collected on those rivers, exclusive of New Orleans, amounts only to \$—, as appears by the annexed table which comes from the Treasury Department. This Department furnishes no evidence of any hospital money paid or any tonnage owned in Kentucky. Perhaps there is no tonnage owned in the State, or possibly it may be enrolled at New Orleans, though there appears to be a surveyor at Louisville, who doubtless has authority to enrol vessels. Leaving, however, this matter to be investigated by the Department to which it belongs, the committee feel persuaded that, if the craft navigating these waters were generally subjected to the payment of hospital money, the same as vessels engaged in

the coasting and foreign trade, a much larger sum would be annually collected than all that has been derived from this source in times past. They see no reason why the laws are not enforced against enrolled tonnage, and none why they should not extend to other craft, as the relief sought for would then be attained on the same principles it is afforded elsewhere.

As early as 1799, Congress provided by law that boats, rafts, or flats, navigating the Mississippi to New Orleans should be liable for hospital money, but when Louisiana was afterwards, in 1804, purchased by the United States, that law, by the cession and the acts consequent thereon, was abrogated, and has never been revived. Much of the craft navigating these waters is believed to be neither enrolled, registered, or licensed, and as the vessels are not recorded, described, or measured, the committee have felt some embarrassment in providing for their liability to pay hospital money. Yet, as they have come to the conclusion that the persons on board such craft need provision for their relief, and cannot have it from this fund without they contribute, and as the best measure of relief will be afforded by extending the provisions of the existing policy, they have resolved to revive the principles of the act of 1803, believing it will be acceptable to all who feel that humanity calls for some charitable provisions for the sick. They, therefore, report a bill, providing, first, that all registered vessels, whether engaged in foreign or coasting trade shall contribute to the fund; second, that all vessels, rafts, flats, or other craft navigating the Mississippi and its tributaries, and over the burden of five tons, shall also be liable to contribute, whether registered or licensed or not.

Statement of the amount of money collected and expended in each State and Territory, for the relief of sick and disabled seamen, from the passage of the laws for that purpose to the 31st December, 1834.

State or Territory.	Amount collected.	Amount expended.
Maine, -	\$110,482 63	\$48,409 67
New Hampshire, -	17,992 78	12,909 66
Massachusetts, -	401,810 82	295,150 09
Vermont, -	261 23	110 94
Rhode Island, -	62,738 76	57,623 59
Connecticut, -	60,154 51	36,512 77
New York, -	385,006 52	398,387 17
New Jersey, -	52,579 13	4,025 26
Pennsylvania, -	156,344 40	271,915 11
Delaware, -	21,465 45	65 20
Maryland, -	142,476 36	311,956 91
District of Columbia, -	23,997 68	18,098 10
Virginia, -	88,084 89	180,286 78
North Carolina, -	52,706 47	61,050 60
South Carolina, -	45,695 06	84,009 19
Georgia, -	19,014 59	69,039 13
Tennessee, -	407 41	16 16
Kentucky, -		659 00
Alabama, -	9,827 51	13,777 93
Louisiana, -	67,282 71	154,247 63
Missouri, -	83 16	
Mississippi, -	2,364 73	133 69
Ohio, -	2,096 63	1,672 42
Florida, -	5,741 69	9,047 28
Michigan, -	430 69	271 21
	\$1,729,045 81	\$2,029,375 49